National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery

Integrating peer-informed approaches to crisis into clinical work

Noël Hunter, Psy.D.

July 31, 2020

National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery

Archive/Certificates of Attendance

This Webinar will be recorded. The PowerPoint presentation is available for download and the audio recording of the teleconference will be emailed to you and posted to the National Coalition website at www.ncmhr.org.

Certificates of attendance will be emailed to you following the webinar.

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Questions?

At the end of the webinar, there will be a Q & A session. You are invited to ask questions at any time through the "question" function. If we don't get to every question, please email the presenter, contact information will be provided.

Noel Hunter, PsyD

Noel Hunter, PsyD is a clinical psychologist working in private practice in New York City. She provides workshops and keynote speeches on the topics of developmental trauma, alternative and humanistic approaches to healing, and mental health advocacy. Her work has appeared in numerous publications and she is the author of the book *Trauma and Madness in Mental Health Services*.

Crisis: What is it?

- Behavioral (suicide attempt, severe self-harm, abuse, threats of violence)
- Emotional (intense and overwhelming distress, traumatic flashbacks, panic)
- Cognitive (confusion, thoughts of suicide, severe dissociation, alternative realities)
- Spiritual (religious, loss of meaning/purpose, at odds with moral/value system)
- Existential (loss of identity, hopelessness, shattered worldview)
- Environmental (loss of housing, loss of job, loss of significant relationships, isolation)

Crises result in intense emotions for all

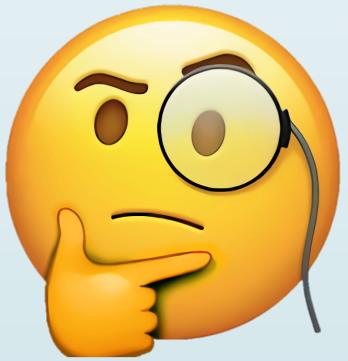
- Fear
- Existential anxiety
- Threatened worldviews
- Helplessness
- Anger
- Guilt

Typical protocol for clinicians

- Remain "objective"
  - Use validated questionnaires
  - Suicide assessment checklists
  - Symptom checklists
- Refer out, medicate
- Call police/admission to hospital

Results of standard practices

- May help save a life or create space for decreasing emotional intensity
- Provides quick triage information
- Helps clinician feel empowered, distant from own fears and anxieties
- Downsides:
  - Isolating
  - Lacks attunement and engagement
  - Can be dehumanizing
  - Can lead to dishonesty on part of person in crisis
  - Can result in distrust/loss of therapeutic relationship
  - Othering
  - Objectifying
  - Statistically mixed results as to usefulness



First-person/peer perspectives

- Feeling heard
- Finding safety
- Trusting relationships
- Feeling supported/not alone
- Feeling understood
- Attunement
- Being able to speak about problems without having to immediately fix them
- Respite
- Feeling/being held
- Empowerment
- Validation
- Gentle challenges
- Lack of judgment

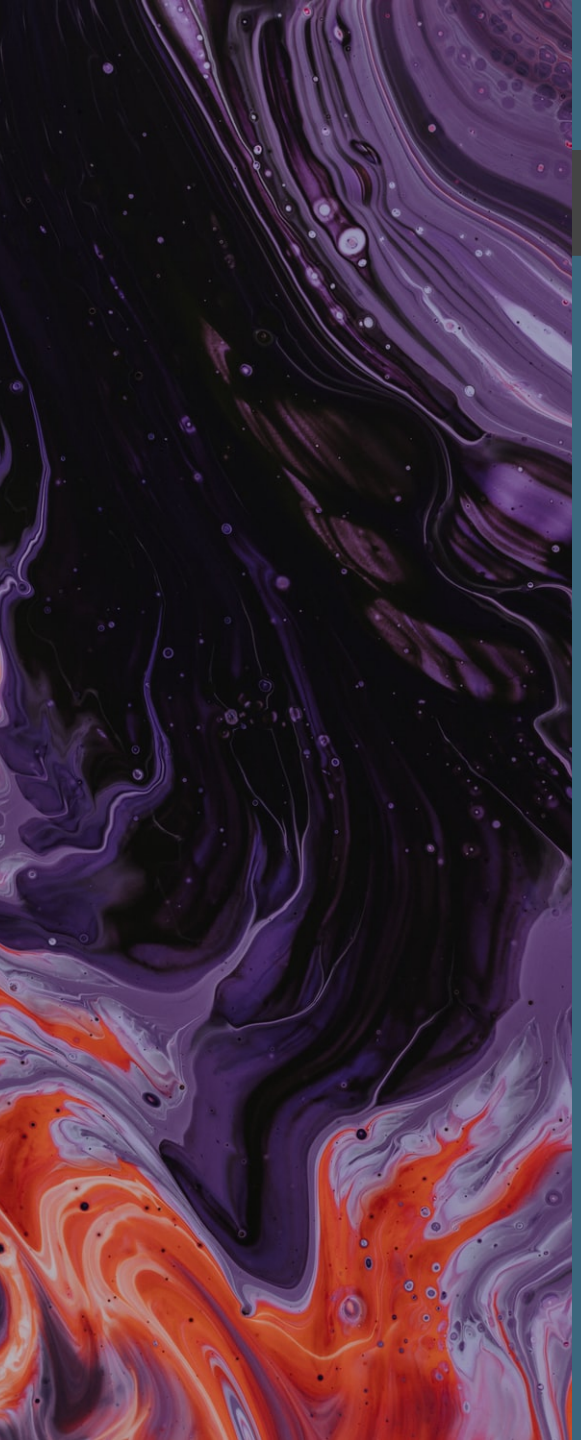
"Therapists that weren't scared of things, they were open to being curious, they were able to tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity, that's been really helpful…having witnesses to personal processes that are caring and non-intrusive is profound."

"When you stop medicalizing people's experiences and look at what happened in that person's life and how these "symptoms" are serving them, that that's when you have a real chance to help them out."

"Any form of trying to make decisions for me has, universally, been very harmful."

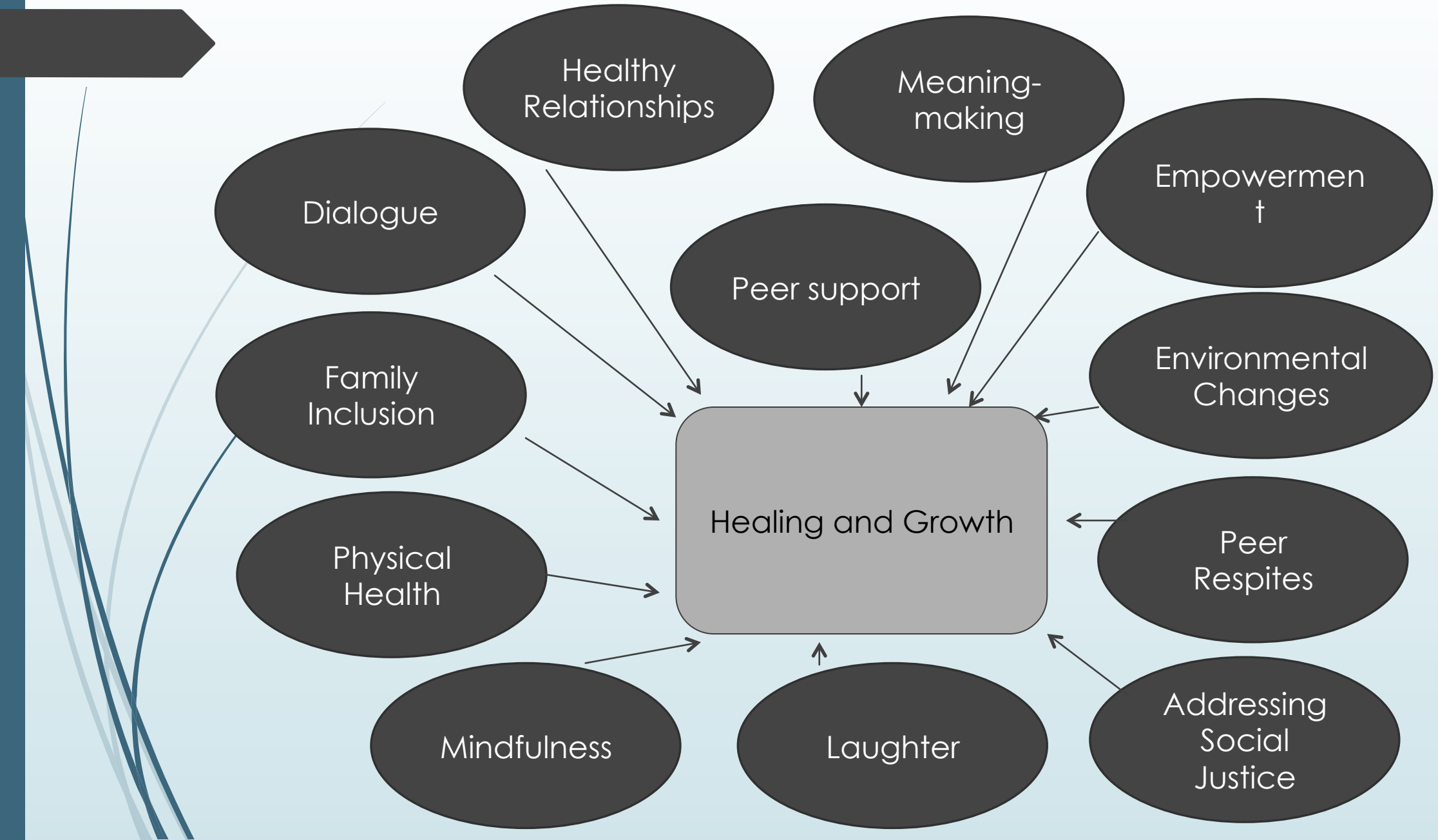
How to integrate conflicting needs and perspectives into clinical work

- Therapy is not without conflict. Navigating conflict can actually be in itself healing
- Value the client's perspective every bit as much, if not more than the clinician's
- Be transparent and open
- Try to be creative and work WITH the client instead of doing to the client
- Take the time to listen
- Thoughtfulness versus reactivity
- Think long-term
- Know that less is more



Helpful for clinicians to consider…

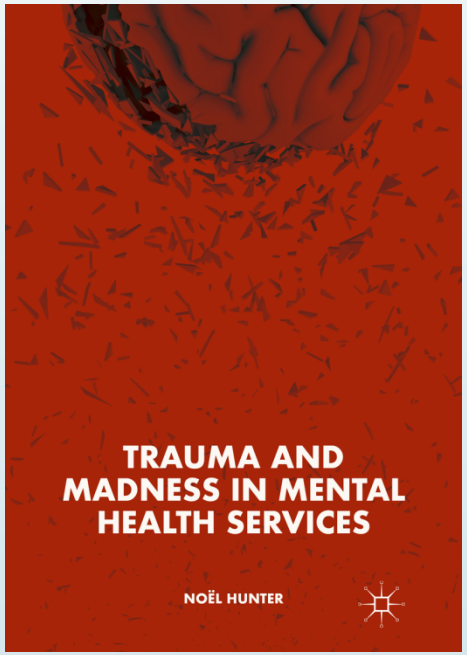
- What led you into this field?
- Whose needs are being fulfilled?
- Providing what someone needs vs. needing to be helpful
- The role of the rescuer
- Unhealed wounds
- Acknowledging privilege


Healthy Relationships
Meaning-making
Dialogue
Empowerment
Peer support
Family Inclusion
Environmental Changes
Healing and Growth
Physical Health
Peer Respites
Mindfulness
Laughter
Addressing Social Justice

How can we help?

- Openness and curiosity
- Honesty
- Egalitarianism
- Collaboration
- Safety
- Encouraging autonomy
- Tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity
- Appreciation for various forms of “expertise”
- Modeling
- Relationship

Noël Hunter

www.noelrhunter.com

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